

Press release – Deal on lobsters gets go-ahead from Parliament



In exchange for the elimination of duties on live or frozen lobster imported from the US, the EU will get duty relief of a comparable economic value on its [own products](#), such as prepared meals, certain crystal glassware and cigarette lighters. This is the first EU-US negotiated tariff-reduction in over 20 years, and is applicable for all WTO trading partners.

Parliament supported the agreement with 638 votes for, 45 against and 11 abstentions “as a basis for renewed constructive transatlantic engagement”.

The resolution notes that the EU and the US have been engaged in a dispute over US tariffs levied in June 2018 on European steel and aluminium and agricultural products.

[Bernd Lange](#) (S&D, DE), rapporteur

“Over the last few years, trade relations between the EU and the US have been marked by tension. This deal on lobsters clearly shows that the EU prefers cooperation to confrontation. The US must stop slapping unilateral tariffs on our companies. We have to settle the Airbus-Boeing case and explore how we can act together, for example, on WTO reform. We must keep in mind that we have more in common than what divides us,” said the rapporteur who also chairs the Trade Committee.

Next steps

[Council has already approved](#) the regulation. Following the plenary vote, the regulation will enter into force on the day following its publication in the Official Journal, with retroactive effect from 1 August 2020.

Background

In the first EU-US tariff reduction deal in two decades, the two partners agreed on 21 August to eliminate or reduce customs duties for a small number of tariff lines covering €168 million of EU and US exports. Check the [list of products here](#).

[Press release – MEPs condemn Turkey’s activities in Varosha, Cyprus, and call for sanctions](#)



In a resolution adopted by 631 votes in favour, 3 against and 59 abstentions, MEPs condemn Turkey’s illegal activities in the Varosha suburb of the city of Famagusta and warn that its partial “opening” weakens prospects of a comprehensive solution to the Cyprus problem, exacerbating divisions and entrenching the permanent partition of the island.

MEPs call on Turkey to transfer Varosha to its lawful inhabitants under the temporary administration of the UN (in accordance with [UN Security Council Resolution 550 \(1984\)](#)) and to refrain from any actions that alter the demographic balance on the island through a policy of illegal settlement.

Tough sanctions against Turkey

A sustainable solution to reunify the island of Cyprus and its people can only be found through dialogue, diplomacy, and negotiations, MEPs stress. They call on the European Council to maintain its unified position on Turkey’s illegal actions and impose tough sanctions in response.

MEPS regret that the Turkish authorities have endorsed the two-state solution

for Cyprus and reiterate their support for a fair, comprehensive and viable settlement on the basis of a bi-communal, bi-zonal federation with a single international legal status. They also call on the EU to play a more active role in bringing the negotiations under UN auspices to a successful conclusion.

Tense EU-Turkey relations

As Turkey distances itself more and more from European values and standards, EU-Turkey relations are at a historic low, warns Parliament. Its illegal and unilateral military actions in the Eastern Mediterranean infringe on the sovereignty of EU member states Greece and Cyprus. MEPs also point out Turkey's direct support of Azerbaijan in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict as well as its actions in Libya and Syria.

Background

The Turkish army fenced off Varosha immediately after the invasion of Cyprus in 1974. The Greek Cypriots who fled from Varosha were not allowed to return and with public entry prohibited, Varosha has effectively become a ghost town.

Re-election of EIOPA's Vice-Chairperson and changes to EIOPA's Management Board composition

Today, the Board of Supervisors of the European Insurance and Occupational Pensions Authority (EIOPA) re-elected Mr Peter Braumüller, Managing Director of Insurance and Pension Supervision at Austrian Financial Market Authority (FMA) as Vice-Chairperson of EIOPA.

In addition, Ms Zuzana Silberova, Executive Director of the Financial Market Supervision Department at the Czech National Bank was re-elected as a Member of the Management Board for a second term of office, and Mr Alberto Corinti, member of the Board of Directors at Italian national supervisory authority, Istituto per la Vigilanza sulle Assicurazioni (IVASS) was elected as a member of the Management Board.

The [Management Board](#) , chaired by EIOPA's Chairperson, Gabriel Bernardino, ensures that EIOPA carries out its mission and performs the tasks assigned to it in accordance with its Regulation.

Press release – MEPs warn of deteriorating fundamental rights in the EU



MEPs strongly condemn the efforts in some member states to weaken the separation of powers and the independence of the judiciary and reiterate the critical need for an [EU mechanism on democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights](#). They point to attacks on media freedom, independence and pluralism, highlighting the democratic role of journalists and whistle-blowers. They also call on member states to refrain from adopting laws that restrict the freedom of assembly, and to put an end to disproportionate and violent interventions by law enforcement authorities.

Protection for disadvantaged people

Vulnerable groups (particularly women, people with disabilities, the elderly, children, migrants, Roma, Travellers and LGBTI+ people), have been disproportionately affected by cuts in government spending, MEPs say, and call for policies that take into account human, economic and social rights. They also draw attention to the importance of a just environmental transition, protecting young people priced out of housing, and to children in poverty.

The report condemns the “organised backlash” against gender equality and women’s rights, including sexual and reproductive health and rights, stressing the right to modern contraceptive methods and safe and legal abortions. It also strongly condemns the alarming rate of femicide in the EU and the segregation of Roma women in maternal health care, calling for this discriminatory practice to be banned immediately, as well as for remedies for the victims of forced sterilisation.

Parliament expresses grave concern over reports that asylum seekers are

facing violent pushbacks and over the humanitarian situation in hotspots. Intimidation, arrests and criminal proceedings against organisations and individuals for providing humanitarian assistance must end. Humanitarian corridors and humanitarian visa programmes must be set up.

Tackling extremism

MEPs warn that hate speech and different forms of racism are becoming normalised, not only by extremists but also by certain government representatives or political leaders, and call for an effective ban on neo-fascist and neo-Nazi groups. They also condemn all attacks on Christians, and call for their equal treatment in Europe and worldwide, following attacks at places of Christian worship.

Further, Parliament:

- underlines the link between organised crime, corruption and freedom of expression, detention facilities, social rights access and human trafficking;
- is concerned about the shrinking space of civil society;
- underlines the risks associated with the use of Artificial Intelligence and data processing for behavioural manipulation; and
- highlights prison conditions, calling for common EU standards in line with international law.

The report was adopted with 330 votes in favour, 298 against and 65 abstentions.

[Press release – New pharmaceutical strategy must guarantee EU citizens equal access to medicines](#)



Commissioner for Health and Food Safety Stella Kyriakides presented the [new Pharmaceutical Strategy](#), adopted yesterday, as an important component of the new [EU Health Union](#). A new strategy was already expected before COVID-19, but in the light of the pandemic, a more ambitious proposal is essential.

Most MEPs welcomed the new strategy, which puts into effect Parliament's requests to [step up efforts to tackle medicine shortages](#) – a problem exacerbated by COVID-19 – and to [move towards a more sensible use and disposal of pharmaceuticals](#) in order to prevent risks to the environment and public health.

Several MEPs highlighted the need for all EU citizens to have equal access to high-quality medicines. They emphasised the need to decrease the EU's dependence on imports of active pharmaceutical ingredients from non-EU countries, namely by increasing their production in Europe and supporting innovation in the EU pharmaceutical industry.

A number of other important issues to be addressed were raised by MEPs, including the development of medicines for the many rare diseases currently without a cure, combatting cancer, antimicrobial resistance, transparency in the supply chains of medicines, joint EU procurement, public-private partnerships, and finalising the health technology assessment legislation.

A video recording of the debate is available [here](#).

Background

The Pharmaceutical Strategy for Europe covers the whole domain of pharmaceuticals, but also some aspects of medical devices. It creates synergies with the Green Deal and the EU Strategic Approach to Pharmaceuticals in the Environment. It is also linked to the [action plan on Intellectual Property](#). The strategy marks the beginning of a process involving several legislative and non-legislative actions, which will be launched and agreed upon by Parliament over the coming years.

Earlier this month, Parliament adopted its position on the [EU4Health Programme](#) after having secured a tripling of the budget to 5.1 billion EUR in the [compromise on the EU's long-term budget](#).